

REMARKS

In the November 17, 2003 Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-26 pending in the application. Upon entry of the foregoing amendments, Applicants amend claims 1, 8, 13 and 20 and add new claims 27-32 for consideration. Support for the amended claims and the new claims may be found in the originally filed specification, and thus, no new matter is added by this amendment. Upon entry of the foregoing amendments, claims 1-32 (4 independent claims; 32 total claims) remain pending in the application. Applicants request reconsideration in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

In the Claims

Claim Rejections

35 U.S.C. §101

Claims 1-26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §101 "because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter." In particular, the Examiner asserts that independent claims 1, 8, 13, and 20 do not include "a distinguishable apparatus, computer implementation, or any other incorporated technology, and would appear to be an attempt to patent an abstract idea not a 'tangible' process and, therefore, non-statutory subject matter." Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Applicants assert that the language of amended independent claims 1, 8, 13, and 20 are directed to statutory subject matter. The relevant technological arts or environment includes using an improved system for providing travel-related information. A useful, concrete, and tangible result of the claimed invention includes a system which matches consumers with particular experts based upon a desired destination city submitted by the consumer such that the consumer may obtain specific information about the destination city. The system integrates information and communication between customers and destination experts in order to facilitate providing travel-related information. The presently claimed invention operates within an improved system where the customer submits a request relating to a destination city and the destination expert provides a response to the customer's request. Thus, the presently claimed invention clearly provides a useful, concrete, and tangible result.

For the above reasons, Applicants submit that amended independent claims 1, 8, 13 and 20 are in conformance with 35 U.S.C. §101, and Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-26 (claims 2-7, 9-12, 14-19, and 21-26 each variously depend from independent claims 1, 8, 13, and 20) under 35 U.S.C. §101.

35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1-26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lauffer, U.S. Patent No. 6,223,165, issued April 24, 2001 (hereinafter "Lauffer"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection and provide the following arguments in support.

Lauffer is limited to a system for delivering advice to consumers by including a server unit that stores and displays the names and characteristics of experts and then assists in connecting the expert and consumer for real-time communication. The server unit also has the ability to receive keywords from the consumer, match those keywords to one or more experts, and then tell the consumer how to contact an expert. Lauffer teaches a visual display of available experts that may be presented to consumers (col. 6, line 30 - col. 7, line 67). In addition, Lauffer teaches having the consumer compensate the expert, either directly or indirectly (col. 8, lines 1-53). In all embodiments disclosed by Lauffer, the consumer and expert establish a connection wherein the consumer and expert communicate interactively with each other (e.g., see col. 8, line 56 - col. 9, line 22). However, Lauffer does not teach or disclose an answer database that may be used to provide previously stored answers to consumer questions.

Claims 1-26 are not rendered obvious by Lauffer because Lauffer does not teach or suggest an "answer database" wherein the destination expert retrieves from the answer database, an answer to the customer request, such that the destination expert's response includes the retrieved answer as set forth in amended independent claims 1, 8, 13, and 20. For example, when the destination expert receives the customer request, the expert responds to the request by using previously stored answers that are stored in

the answer database. The expert can either select the answers automatically, or can cut and past the answers into a response.

In fact, Lauffer teaches away from the presently claimed invention by providing for a system that has the consumer and expert set up an interactive communication connection, whereby the expert answers the consumer's questions in an interactive fashion and the expert does not utilize an answer database containing previously stored answers. Accordingly, Lauffer does not render amended independent claims 1, 8, 13 and 20 obvious. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the Section 103 rejection with respect to claims 1-26 (claims 2-7, 9-12, 14-19, and 21-26 each variously depend from independent claims 1, 8, 13 and 20).

In addition, Applicants assert that Lauffer do not render new dependent claims 27-32 obvious, as, *inter alia*, dependent claims 27-32 variously depend from independent claims 1, 13, and 20.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending claims, namely 1-26, fully comply with 35 U.S.C §112 and are allowable over the art of record. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested. Should the Examiner wish to discuss any of the above in greater detail or deem that further amendments should be made to improve the form of the claims, then the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the Examiner's convenience.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: David O. Caplan
David O. Caplan
Reg. No. 41,655

SNELL & WILMER, L.L.P.
One Arizona Center
400 East Van Buren
Phoenix, AZ 85004-2202
Direct: (602) 382-6284
Fax: (602) 382-6070
Email: dcaplan@swlaw.com